be allowed to avail of 10 restricted holidays in a year. Government holidays should be delinked from the holidays under the Negotiable Instrument Act.

**Investment of EPF Assets**

1745. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has invested 80 per cent of its assets in a special deposit scheme which is paying only nine per cent interest and the fund would not be able to sustain a 9.5 per cent interest rate and would thus eat its surplus;

(b) whether it is also a fact that he has promised to pay 9.5 per cent interest rate to the EPF subscribers; and

(c) if so, how Government propose to cover up the gap?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) As on 30.09.2002, of the total corpus of Employees Provident Fund, 78.46% has been invested in the Special Deposit Scheme (SDS).

(b) and (c) According to the Central Board of Trustees (Employees Provident Fund), it would be sustainable to fix the rate of interest on Employees Provident Fund for 2002-2003 at 9.5%.

**Appointment of Lokpal**

1746. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court of India during the cause of a recent judgement under scored the need for appointment of a Lokpal to ensure probity in public life;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) by when the institution of Lokpal is likely to be created and an incumbent put in place?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) During the course of argument, on 19.8.2002, in W.P. (C) No. 26 of 1995—Common Cause, a Registered Society-*vs*-Union of India and others and upon a query from the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the then Solicitor General informed the status of the Lokpal Bill and the Hon'ble

Court was pleased to observe the need to appoint the Lokpal at the earliest. In his submissions the then Solicitor General informed the Hon'ble Supreme Court that the Lokpal Bill, 2001 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 14th August, 2001, whereafter it was referred to the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs for examination and report and the Standing Committee has since presented its Report on the Lokpal Bill, 2001 to the Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha and Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 31.12.2001. The observations/recommendations made by the Standing Committee on this Bill are under examination in consultation with the Department of Legal Affairs. It was merely an observation of the Hon'ble Court and not the order passed by the Court.

(c) The issue of creation of the institution of Lokpal and appointment thereto could be considered only after the Lokpal Bill, 2001 becomes an Act of Parliament.

**Right to Information in Government Departments**

†1747. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the various Government Departments in which "Right to Information" is in force and since when;

(b) whether there is any legal provision for the same or only administrative orders have been issued in this regard;

(c) whether any proposal is under consideration to implement it more effectively; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (d) With a view to introducing greater transparency and openness in the functioning of Government and public bodies, Government had introduced the 'Freedom of Information Bill, 2000' in the Lok Sabha on 25th July, 2000. The Bill, as introduced in the Lok Sabha and pending therein, was referred to the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs for examination and report thereon. The Standing Committee presented its Report to both the Houses of Parliament on 25th July, 2001. The Bill, as reported by the Standing Committee, was considered and passed by the Lok Sabha on 3rd December, 2002.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.